

Creativity is the currency of the future

 By [Brett Morris](#)

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I never like to weigh in on trends or predictions because, among many other reasons I've given before, human beings are generally awful at predicting the future.



Brett Morris, group CEO of FCB Africa.

Of course, there is never a shortage of soothsayers peddling portents of doom or glorious gain, but the future they espouse is generally filled with the thing that they happen to be selling. So I suppose that is a prediction of sorts, because they see themselves providing a service to you in the near future and, if they're good at what they do, that prediction will probably come true.

Whereas we used to have wait a good few months, or even an entire year, before some new hype, now it seems that a day doesn't go by without another doohickey making an appearance.

There seems to be a correlation between Moore's Law and the levels of anxiety that agencies and clients have around navigating the complexity that technology brings.

The panic-proliferation curve

Like the very steep price-performance technology curve, there is an equally steep incline in the panic-proliferation curve, which also seems to be doubling every year. Technology and the resultant complexity it brings to marketing are causing the pendulum to swing once again to the side of expedience and meticulous measurement rather than creativity.

It's worth noting how the pendulum has, for the most part, defied gravity over the last decade, hanging determinedly on one side, dominating boardroom conversations and KPI reports as technology and its resultant platforms have spawned new marketing opportunities, or in many cases ghosts, for brands to chase.

And chase they did. They chased pop-ups and pop-downs, they chased Facebook likes, they chased people across the internet with banners and they chased all manner of often-spurious metrics that were measurable for sure, but not necessarily relevant.

That's not to say that metrics are bad. As Matthys Esterhuysen, executive experience director at Hellocomputer points out, we seemed to get stuck on the metric and forget why we were measuring in the first place.

Metrics alone are not building or sustaining brands

It's not bad to want to build a Facebook community, it's bad when you forget about the community and focus on a number, regardless of whether it represents an actual community.

The number itself is meaningless without context. This point is especially important now that we're charging into a data-lead industry. The number represents something, usually a person, it can tell you a lot, but not everything.

“ For a while there, as clients realised that metrics alone were not building or sustaining their brands, creativity once again began reclaiming its value. But alas, I predict that, after a brief resurgence, creativity will once again be competing for attention with shinier technological pennies. ”

Fortunately, we work with many clients who place more, or at the very least equal, value on creativity and technology, appreciating that creativity can have an *exponential* impact with technology in support. And just like brands that enjoy exponential value by continuing to spend on marketing in a recession, I believe those that focus on creativity while others are chasing ghosts and collecting pennies will ultimately win.

Creativity in the most exciting era of communication

Now, at the risk of being labelled a Luddite (especially since I used the word *doohickey* above) I feel I have to point out the obvious, which is that **we are entering one of the most exciting eras in communication**.

There is so much potential in big data, artificial intelligence, automation, martech platforms, voice and image recognition, among many other things that we can't yet even fathom. These technologies will fundamentally change how advertisers operate and make storytelling exponentially more powerful.

But only if we use them in support of undeniably the most valuable asset that we have in our arsenal: creativity. Creativity will become *more* powerful as the technology curve gets steeper. And brands that circumvent it, or devalue it, do so at their

own peril.

It's the currency of the future and the best investment you can make.

ABOUT BRETT MORRIS

Brett Morris is the CEO of Nahana Communications Group. In 2014 Brett was appointed Group Chief Executive and has since been voted by his peers as most admired agency leader in Johannesburg for five years in a row and three times across South Africa.

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